

Notes on British Butterflies: Spring and Early Summer 1974

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A fine sunny day on 16th March brought the first Spring butterflies out when about 20 *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. and a lone *Brephos parthenias* L. were seen in a Romsey wood. *Nymphalis io* L. and *Aglais urticae* L. did not put in an appearance until about a week later, but were flying freely in our Southampton garden by the end of the month.

My elder son came with me to the Isle of Wight on 29th March where we saw numerous larvae of *Melitea cinxia* L. out in the weak sunlight on the Undercliff. On the way back we saw a Water Rail in a ditch in the middle of Niton — an unusual location for such a secretive bird.

Polygonia c-album L. appeared in our garden during the first days of April, and by mid-month *Pararge aegeria* L. and the three Spring Whites had joined them.

A very early male *Antocharis cardamines* L. was seen flying along the road near Isfield in Sussex on 20th April but the main emergence was not until the usual time in early May — in Southern Hampshire at least. I went to look at a wood near Eastleigh on 15th May where 80% of the *cardamines* population are said to be dwarfed. The few Orange Tips on the wing were certainly smaller than typical specimens, but the small numbers precluded a significant assessment of frequency.

Plenty of *Hamearis lucina* L. were flying in a favourite wood near Winchester two days later, and the females were already ovipositing. *Clossiana euphrosyne* L. was fairly common in the coppiced areas and there were a few *Pyrgus malvae* L. and *Erynnis tages* L. about also.

Beating Blackthorns caused me to get very wet indeed when I visited an Oxfordshire locality for *Strymonidia pruni* L. on a showery 24th May. A few larvae of this local hairstreak were obtained. Not far away male *Euphydryas aurinia* Rott. were flying in fair numbers during the spells of bright sunshine.

The Whitparish woods on the Bank Holiday Monday held good numbers of *C. euphrosyne*, and also a few *C. selene* D. and S., but I was surprised to find I had the place to myself as far as fellow lepidopterists were concerned. Nearby, on Pepperbox Hill, *Coenonympha pamphilus* L., *Polyommatus icarus* Rott., *P. malvae*, *E. tages* and a solitary female *Cupido minimus* Fuessl. were on the wing.

Single specimens of *minimus* were also flying on the downs near Winchester on 30th May; here at least the food plant is abundant, whereas on Pepperbox the Kidney vetch is very sparse.

I drove up to the Midlands on the last day of the month, and staying with friends near Leicester spent a couple of days searching for *Carterocephalus palaemon* Pall. On the way north,

I dropped into an Oxford locality for *E. aurinia* in order to release a large number that I had bred from this same stock. A quick look also, at a favourite ride in Salcey Forest, revealed an excellent showing of *Leptidea sinapis* L. But I drew a blank for *palaemon*, though I searched assiduously several areas where it was seen as recently 1969. Some sites looked suitable, and my expectations remained high — specimens of *Lycaena phlaeas* L., half-glimpsed in the sunlight caused severe palpitations on two occasions!

Warm sunny weather was the rule in early June, and I was able to make several visits to a wood a few miles outside Southampton. *C. euphrosyne* and *C. selene* were still out in fair numbers, the first *Vanessa cardui* L. was seen, and a few larvae of *Thecla betulae* L. were obtained from blackthorns. In Southampton itself, *Ochlodes venata* Br. and Grey appeared in our garden on 10th June, and also many *cardamines* larvae on Sweet Rocket in the borders. I had never before seen Orange Tips flying anywhere near this part of Southampton, so their presence was something of a mystery.

Rather unsettled conditions prevailed from mid-June to the end of the month, and this was really the pattern for the rest of the summer. Disaster befell one of my larvae of *Apatura iris* L., which was eaten by an earwig a few hours after its fourth moult, but the other pupated on 3rd June, remained 25 days in that stage, and finally emerged during a brief moment of sunshine on a day of wild and heavy showers.

Some Notes on *Thera juniperata* (L.) (Lep.: Geometridae) in North-West England

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I was much interested to read Mr. C. I. Rutherford's account of the occurrence of *Thera juniperata* in Cheshire and Yorkshire. (*Ent. Rec.*, 86:121) and it stimulated me to go through the records for this district which is mainly in VC 69. The species has always seemed to be a rather elusive one in this area in spite of the occurrence of much juniper locally. In early October 1957 I made a determined effort to find this moth and visited a few of the juniper localities — on the carboniferous limestone areas at Beetham and Arnside Knott and on the Borrowdale volcanic rocks between Little Langdale and Blea Tarn in central Lakeland. In both areas I operated mv light on nights when conditions seemed good, as evinced by the general numbers of other lepidoptera coming on the sheet. But nary a sign of *juniperata*. Retrospectively I now think that my search in 1957 failed because I was too early in the month, all my dates being prior to the middle of October.